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¶1. (U) Below is a compilation of political highlights from Embassy New Delhi for January 11-29, 2010, that did not feature in our other reporting, including:

- Vice-President Ansari: Make Intelligence Agencies Accountable to Parliament
- Junior Ministers Disgruntled, Tell PM Singh They Are Underutilized
- Indian Premier League v. Pakistani Cricketers
- Ambassador Kozak Hosts Roundtable on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Speech

Vice-President Hamid Ansari Calls for Parliamentary Accountability of Intelligence Agencies  
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¶2. (U) Amid the ongoing transition in the security establishment (NSA Menon took over from M.K. Narayanan last week ) Ref A.), Vice-President Hamid Ansari called for legislative accountability for the Indian intelligence apparatus. While delivering the annual R.N. Rao Memorial Lecture at the headquarters of the Indian Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) intelligence agency on January 19, V.P. Ansari cited the U.S. model of legislative oversight and called for a similar parliamentary standing committee structure in India, with oversight and accountability of all intelligence agencies. Calling for greater openness and coordination, Ansari argued that the current mechanism, with several intelligence agencies reporting to different ministries, &does not address the complexity of intelligence gathering or maximize results8.

¶3. (U) Ansari was also critical of any mechanism that reports to a single person or ministry. Ansari,s remarks run counter to those of Home Minister Chidambaram. Since his visit to the National Counter-Terrorism Center in Washington in November 2009, Minister Chidambaram has made several speeches and press statements expressing his desire to consolidate all intelligence, internal security, and counterterrorism functions under a single entity that reports to him.

#### Junior Ministers Out of the Loop, Complain to PM

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¶4. (U) Thirty-three of the 38 Ministers of State from PM Singh's government met with him on January 19 to complain about a lack of work and involvement in their assigned ministries. Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Jyotiraditya Scindia summed-up the frustrations of the gathered ministers, who claim they have been given no substantive responsibilities by Cabinet Ministers, saying "you have given us power, but please empower us." PM Singh and UPA chair Sonia Gandhi reportedly want to groom younger ministers for greater responsibility in the future, however the gathered ministers complained that the bureaucrats in their respective ministries know more about policy formulation than they did. Junior ministers want to be invited to meetings and be involved in the decision making processes of their respective ministries, but they alleged that they are actively excluded and kept out of the loop.

¶5. (U) The Ministers pointed out redundant portfolios and asked the PM to be involved in work allocation within each ministry, a task that is likely to be a logistical nightmare. PM Singh advised the junior Ministers to travel and focus on their parliamentary duties, and to understand leading technology innovations in their respective ministries. Quibbling about irrelevant portfolios and lack of responsibility is not new; in the early 90's, then Prime Minister Narasimha Rao abolished the rank of Deputy Minister hoping to reduce redundancy and create efficient ministries.

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#### Pakistani cricket players snubbed by Indian Premier League, Media Frenzy Ensues

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¶6. (SBU) The India-Pakistan cricket rivalry went into over-drive when none of the Indian Premier League (IPL) teams recruited Pakistani players for the upcoming 2010 season. Cricket ties between the South Asian rivals have weakened since the 26/11 terrorist attacks in Mumbai in 2008. Pakistani players played for the eight IPL franchises in its introductory season in 2007, but did not play in the 2008 and 2009 seasons because of "security concerns." All of the IPL teams refrained from picking up contracts for 11 highly ranked Pakistani players during the January 19 auction, fueling a media frenzy about a planned conspiracy to exclude and shame Pakistan. Images of IPL chairman Lalit Modi's effigies burning in Lahore streets splashed across the front pages of newspapers, while IPL team owners denied any conspiracy to exclude Pakistani players.

¶7. (SBU) Privately, IPL owners leaked stories to the press claiming that the decision to exclude Pakistani players stemmed from the GoI's refusal to guarantee visas and security for them. These leaks dominated English and regional language media, embarrassing GoI officials who denied any involvement in the IPL's decision to snub Pakistani players. On January 25, Home Minister Chidambaram criticized the IPL's decision to pass on Pakistani players, calling it "a disservice to cricket".

¶8. (SBU) Embassy contacts told PolOff that the snubbing was indicative of a larger battle between the influential Board for Control of Cricket in India (BCCI) and the GoI. The powerful and wealthy BCCI is the IPL's governing parent body. In January 2010, the Income Tax department removed BCCI's non-profit clause and imposed a tax of USD 25 million on the organization. This was reportedly in retaliation for the IPL's decision to move its 2009 finals to South Africa; the IPL blamed the GoI for refusing to guarantee security for its matches. The GoI in turn was incensed that the highly profitable IPL refused private security when the GoI was picking up the tab for poll security across India for the

2009 general elections.

¶9. (SBU) The battle over the multi-billion dollar cricket industry in India has political overtones -- the IPL is headed primarily by staunch supporters of the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party and non-Congress Party stalwarts. This current battle is not the first attempt by the ruling Congress party to get their fingers in the glamorous and lucrative cricket pie. Conflicting press stories of reconciliation and inclusion of Pakistani players are still making the rounds, with the Pakistani Sports Minister Ijaz Jakhani asking the GoI to intervene. The row over the IPL auctions appears to have further strained people-to-people ties between the two rival nations and has dominated press coverage in India.

Ambassador Kozak's Roundtable with Indian Civil Society

¶10. (SBU) On January 22 Ambassador Michael Kozak, Senior Advisor to the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, exchanged views on religious freedom and freedom of speech with four prominent civil society leaders. Participants at the roundtable included Tarlochan Singh, former chairperson of the National Commission for Minorities and current Member of Parliament; Father Babu Joseph, Spokesperson from the Catholic Bishop Conference of India (CBCI); Ravi Nair, Director of the South Asia Human Rights Documentation Center; and Sultan Shahin, senior analyst at Asia Times and editor of the New Age Islam online portal.

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¶11. (SBU) Nair encouraged Kozak to engage European nations on religious freedom and freedom of expression, contending that the issue of religious freedom extends beyond OIC countries. He criticized the GOI's refusal to issue visas to members of the U.S. Commission for International Religious Freedom, who wanted to examine the state of religious freedom in India. Nair noted that the commission's annual report does not contain anything disturbing and stressed that the GOI should respect the freedom of expression of others rather than attempt to censor differing views. Singh told Kozak that while freedom of expression is important, authorities should take appropriate actions against those who deliberately offend minorities. All participants agreed on the need for missionaries to be able to visit India, with Nair adding that visa approvals to such people should be based on reciprocity.

¶12. (SBU) The Indian interlocutors present at the roundtable collectively stressed the need for greater accountability in legal systems in India and around the world regarding religious freedom issues. Ravi, Singh, and Joseph said that although the Indian government supports peaceful religious pluralism in the country, the legal system's response to interference with religious belief do not usually reflect this purported tolerance. Nair noted that few prosecutions took place against the perpetrators of the 2008 violence in Orissa, and that there was little movement in prosecuting the cases related to the 2002 violence in Gujarat, despite sufficient evidence. The government's new proposed communal law is weak and unacceptable, Nair contended, because it fails to make the police accountable for the actions of its members during riots. All the interlocutors stressed the importance of prosecuting those in the police who commit violence during communal incidents. One hurdle to achieving overall accountability, noted Ravi, is that incidents related to communal issues involving officials are required to first obtain permission from the executive before they can be heard in court. Other participants agreed on the importance of creating a structure to facilitate accountability and corrective action in response to outbreaks of religious violence.

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